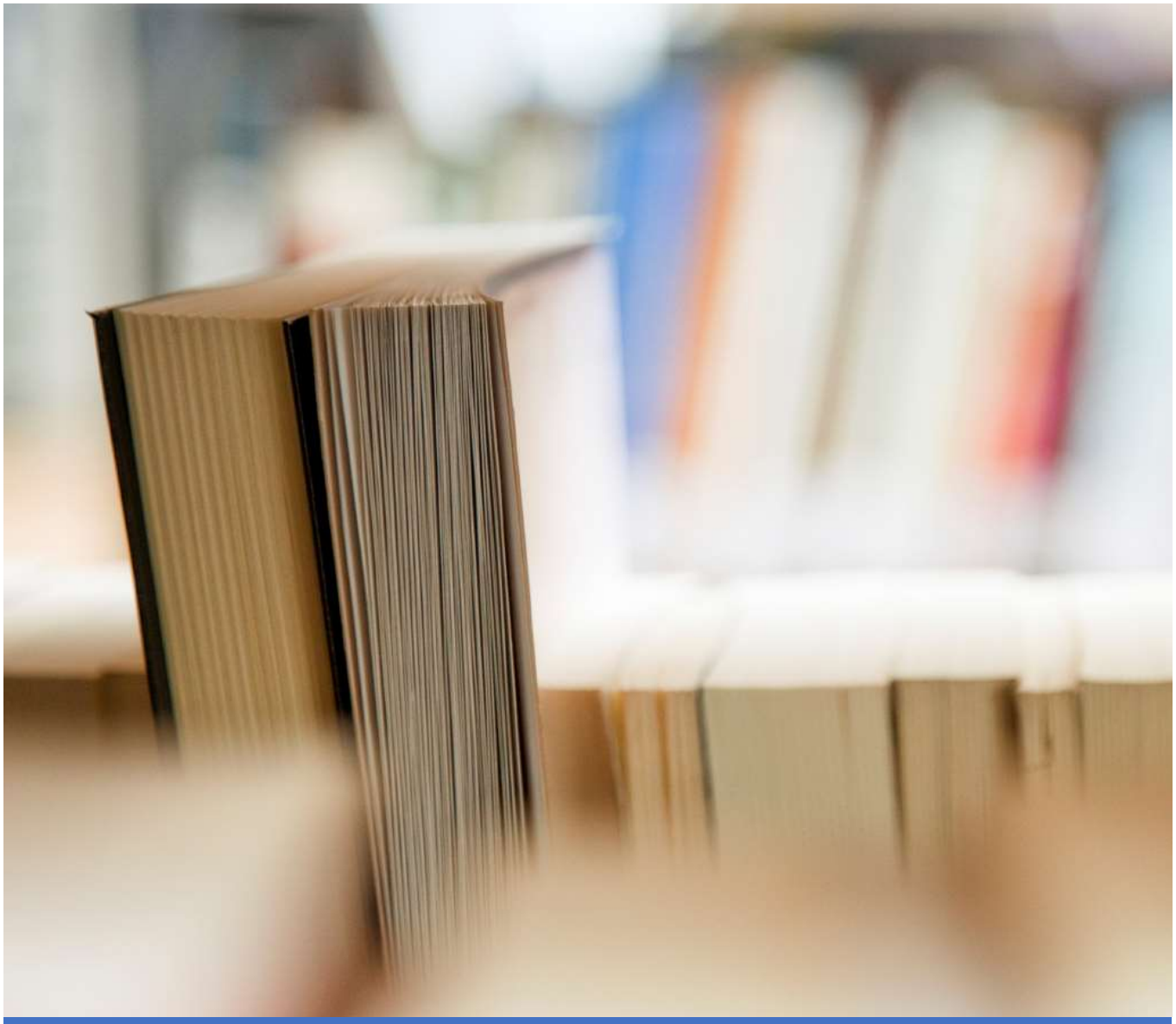

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Outsourcing of Clinical Laboratory Services in Pakistan

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Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department of Punjab Government, Pakistan owns 25 district headquarter hospitals, 100 tehsil headquarter hospitals and a number of rural health centres and basic health units. Currently, the department started process of revamping in hospitals and other healthcare delivery centres. In first phase, revamping of infrastructure and services of 25 district headquarter and 15 tehsil headquarter hospitals was started. For better care to patients and service delivery, services of janitorial and security were outsourced to private service providers. Now, the department plans to improve diagnostic services in these hospitals. For this purpose, laboratory and radiology services were planned to outsource. Islamabad Diagnostic Centre and Northshore Medical Labs are the two service providers who are to provide clinical laboratory services in selected hospitals. Islamabad Diagnostic Centre (Private Limited) is a leading diagnostic centre in Islamabad (Federal capital of Islamic Republic of Pakistan) which is ISO 151589:2012. While, Northshore Medical Labs is an American laboratory located and registered in New York State Department of Health and accredited by College of American Pathologist. It is expected to enhance clinical laboratory services standard by outsourcing of these laboratory services. First such laboratory became functional in District Headquarter Hospital Chakwal last month. Although the contract between outsourced laboratory and department describes upraising of services and quality standard by following MSDS(1) and departmental proficiency testing.(2) But following terms(3, 4) should must be kept in view while outsourcing any clinical laboratory services:

- Impact of outsourced services on procuring agency's (in present case, Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department of Punjab, Pakistan) mission
- Reliability and stability of service provider
- Financial comparisons between internal and outsourced laboratories.
  (In present case, it will be worthwhile to do this analysis as Pakistan is under economic loans of IMF)
- Impact on regulatory enforcement
- Departmental potential for monitoring such services
- Relevant conflicts of interest
- Potential to evaluate skill level of outsourced laboratory staff

Past outsourcing in Pakistan and other developed countries as well usually occurred as part of political decisions and found to had a great impact on political situation. (4)

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